

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 14587

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT VE
SUBJ: AD PRESIDENTIAL RACE

REF: CARACAS A-165 OF DEC 15, 1976

1. FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY OF THE REFERENCE WHICH EMBASSY CALLS
TO DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION.

2. ONE YEAR AGO VENEZUELA WAS ON THE EVE OF NATIONALIZATING ITS
PETROLEUM INDUSTRY. THE PEREZ ADMINISTRATION WAS RIDING A WAVE
OF POPULARITY AND THE GOVERNING ACCION DEMOCRATICA (AD) PARTY
WAS SURE OF ITS GRIP ON THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY.
TODAY, WITH THE 1978 ELECTIONS TWO YEARS AWAY, AD IS NOT AS
CONFIDENT AS IT ONCE WAS. ONE REASON FOR THIS IS THE PROSPECT
OF RUNNING AGAINST SENATOR LUIS HERRERA CAMPINS, COPEI'S ALL-BUT-
OFFICIALLY-DESIGNED PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. ANOTHER IS A RECENT
POLL WHICH SHOWED THAT THE PEREZ ADMINISTRATION HAS SLIPPED IN
POPULARITY. SOME ADECOS FEAR THAT THEIR PARTY'S FRONT-RUNNER
FOR THE AD NOMINATION, PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL LUIS PINERUA
ORDAZ, WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO DEFEAT HERRERA. THIS UNCERTAINTY
HAS WHETTED THE INTEREST OF SOME OTHER POTENTIAL CONTENDERS,
AMONG THEM DEPUTIES JAIME LUSINCHI AND DAVID MORALES
BELLO AND SENATOR REINALDO LEANDRO MORA, IN BECOMING THE NOMINEE.
SO FAR, THE ONLY OTHER ANNOUNCED CANDIDATE IS LUSINCHI, AND THERE IS
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EVIDENCE THAT OTHER ANTI-PINERUA ELEMENTS WITHIN THE
PARTY HAVE DECIDED TO LEND LUSINCHI THERE SUPPORT. THE ODDS
NOW ARE AGAINST LUSINCHI'S OVERTAKING PINERUA. THE FINAL CHOICE
FOR THE PARTY'S 1978 CANDIDATE, WILL BE MADE AT THE AD CONVENTION
TO BE HELD PROBABLY IN AUGUST 1977. THE VIEWS OF THREE TOP AD
LEADERS, ROMULO BETANCOURT, PRESIDENT PEREZ, AND AD PRESIDENT

GONAZALO BARRIOS, WILL BE DECISIVE IN MAKING THAT CHOICE.
VAKY

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